

WASHINGTON – Today, Congressman Earl Blumenauer issued the following statement regarding trade agreements passed out of the Ways and Means Committee:

Today marks an important step in the development of America's trade agenda. On balance, the package of measures moving forward is a constructive development for America's economy and particularly for Oregon. The people I represent will see increased sales abroad of machinery, technology, and agricultural products. This in turn will lead to increased activity at Oregon's ports. Beef exports from Oregon will increase which will help our states ranchers and farmers.

There will be long overdue assistance for the workers hurt by the trade. Not everyone wins in trade, so it is critical to have the Trade Assistance Agreement help for American workers who are disadvantaged.

Some people have complained that this process took too long, but I commend the administration and my colleagues in Congress who didn't rush to approve trade deals that weren't good enough. Dramatic improvements have been made to the Korean FTA where blatant unfairness toward American automobile sales in Korea has been addressed. Indeed, the Korean FTA is now supported by the American workers who make cars. The ensuing time has also resulted in improvements to the Panamanian Agreement, particularly by bringing their labor laws up to ILO standards and improving international tax compliance.

It's no secret Colombian Agreement has been the most troubling. The United States has a responsibility to help this country that has been damaged by the United States appetite for illegal drugs. This illicit trade in drugs posed huge problems for Colombia. Over the years there has been progress dealing with a disturbing trend of violence towards union activists that has gained attention far and wide. Colombia appears to be the most dangerous place on earth to be a union worker. According to the international Trade Union Conference, in 2010 Colombia had more union worker assassinations -49- than the rest of the world combined. ENS, a labor think tank cited by the ILO and State Department, estimates more than 20 unionists have already been murdered this year.

Although there has been progress on some trends and with the adoption of a labor action plan, I did not support the Colombian agreement. The fact that such a plan was not incorporated into

the text of the agreement and was not therefore enforceable though the agreement and the continuing labor violence led me ultimately to vote against the deal. I am hopeful that if the agreement goes forward, that there is a platform that we can build upon to make progress in the future.

In total, these agreements represent improvements that we can build upon, but does not signal that we can relax our efforts. There is more that can be done. We need to redouble our efforts to assure benefits of trade are more widely distributed and the spirit in which we discuss today, that they are in fact enforced.

I am encouraged by renewed commitment to use the tools of organized trade as they're supposed to be enforced. I was pleased that the Senate is acting on Chinese currency manipulation which I feel violates the letter and the spirit of our international trade agreements. I appreciate the Administration's decision to impose tariffs on illegal, Chinese activity on the tire market, which was sustained by the WTO. I look forward to helping ensure a continued focus on appropriate trade enforcement.

Our economy has grown increasingly interdependent around the world, especially in Oregon. Our best efforts are needed to make sure we realize the promise of international free trade and that it is not a one way street. The years spent to improve these trade agreements was an important step in that direction.